



**HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits**  
**Building Services Division**

**SWIMMING POOL SAFETY ENCLOSURES**  
**Above Ground Pool with an Attached Deck**

An above ground swimming pool with sidewalls that are at least four feet high does not require enclosure by a separate fence as long as the pool has a removable or lock-up ladder. Many pool owners build an adjacent deck area either at one side or completely around the pool. Access to the pool must be limited by additional fencing or gates if the deck adjoins the house or when steps are installed down to the ground. These situations present unique design features to comply with all aspects of the building code. The following examples are simple solutions that are often used by knowledgeable contractors to comply with the code. Other designs are possible and the code does not limit design possibilities.

**Situation #1: Deck with stairs down to the ground.**

The deck is built with a normal 36 inch high guardrail with pickets 4 inches apart except at the end where the stairs will be located. The guardrail on this end is built 48 inches high with 4 inch spacing between the pickets. Both guardrail designs are such that a bottom rail is not used. Instead, the pickets attach to the side of the deck. Prior to starting the stairs, a 3' x 3' landing must be built to accommodate an out-swing gate (the pool enclosure code requires gates to open out from the pool area and the stair code does not allow gates to open over top of the steps). The gate should be a solid board construction. The latch side of the guardrail should also be a solid board construction for a distance of 18 inches. Latch hardware must be located on the pool side of the gate only. See the attached plans for details.

**Situation #2: House deck connected to pool deck with stairs.**

Normally, one deck is attached to the house and the pool deck is higher or lower and connected with a set of stairs. Follow situation #1 guidelines and adapt them to create the barrier between the two decks.

**Situation #3: One deck from the house to the pool.**

All doors from the house onto the deck must have alarms that comply with the pool enclosure code. The majority of accidental drownings occurred when small children entered the pool area from the house without supervision. The small battery operated alarm mounted near the top of the door allows the adult to activate the pass-through mode for 15 seconds to use the door. A small child can not reach the keypad and the alarm sounds when the door opens. These alarms are available through pool supply dealers. Any stairs to the ground would have to comply with situation #1 above.

Questions regarding code requirements may be directed to Residential Plan Review at 410.638.3022.

